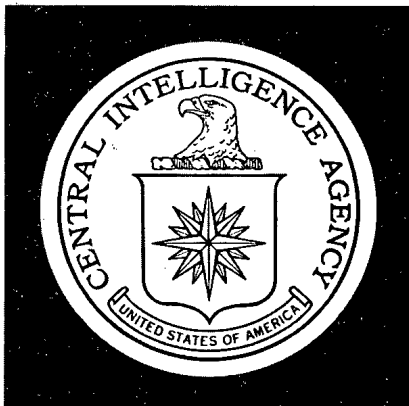


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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

KIM IL-SUNG PURGES PROBABLE OPPONENTS OF  
HIS ADVENTURISM

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
23 April 1969

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Kim Il-sung Purges  
Probable Opponents of His Adventurism

Summary

In the 15 months between seizure of the Pueblo and destruction of the U.S. reconnaissance aircraft, Kim Il-sung has chosen to purge military and party leaders who apparently have been reluctant to take such risks. The most important victims of the purge have been the former defense minister and the former army chief-of-staff. Their replacements -- generals loyal to Kim who supported him against his domestic opponents -- have demanded unquestioning fidelity to all of Kim's militant policies. On 11 April 1969, the party paper implied that "enemies at home and abroad" had been criticizing Kim's leadership, and it called for a struggle against anti-Kim sentiments. But Kim's ability to impose an adventurist, risky policy on the North Korean regime should be further strengthened as a result of the outcome of the recent shootdown. Additional spectacular actions against vulnerable American or South Korean units or facilities may be expected, although not necessarily in the near future.

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Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Special Research Staff and was coordinated with the Office of National Estimates and the Office of Current Intelligence.

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1. In shooting down a U.S. plane over international waters 15 months after the Pueblo incident, Kim Il-sung has again demonstrated that he is willing to take risks which the Soviet and Chinese leaders avoid.

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Apparently in order to continue on his militant course since the seizure of the Pueblo, Kim has had to purge key military men, replacing them with generals willing to support his adventurist policy (as well as Kim's fortress-Korea domestic program).

2. Kim began the purge in the fall of 1968 by removing Defense Minister Kim Chang-pong (last public appearance in September 1968), replacing him with General Choe Hyon. Kim then removed the Army Chief-of-Staff General Choe Kwang; in February 1969, General O Chin-u was identified as the new army C/S. Both of the promoted men had proved themselves to be loyal to Kim during earlier party infighting, and both have since appealed to the army to support Kim "without questioning" the wisdom of any of his policies.

3. The new Defense Minister proved his loyalty to Kim during major purges of the leadership in April 1967. Within one month of this important behind-the-scenes showdown on Kim's militarization policies, General Choe Hyon was singled out for praise -- unprecedented for him -- as "an intimate comrade-in-arms of Comrade Kim Il-sung." In the same showdown, General O sharply criticized Kim's major opponent and was personally supported in this attack by Kim himself. Both generals were subsequently rewarded by being given their new posts at the head of the Defense Ministry and the army general staff, respectively. In addition, loyalty may have been reinforced by nepotism in the case of General Choe, who reportedly is married to Kim's sister.

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4. The new Army Chief-of-Staff General O Chin-u seemed to be hinting, in an important policy speech to officers and men of the KPA on 7 February 1969, that opposition to Kim had developed within the army, probably on the issue of risk-taking such as seizure of the Pueblo. General O conceded that as a consequence of taking the Pueblo, the U.S. "threatened us with a terrific hue and cry, sending to the Eastern Sea the 'Enterprise,' their biggest nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, and moving many up-to-date planes newly into South Korea." He went on to say that the regime was "not frightened" and that the American apology (to gain release of the crew) was "proof" of a defeat for the U.S. He then warned that

No force on earth can dampen the fidelity  
of the officers and men of the People's  
Army to the party and leader.

As demonstrated by usage in polemical statements issued during the Sino-Soviet dispute, the phrase "no force on earth" holds a special meaning for Communist regimes, indicating a rebuff administered to opposition forces. This most recent usage by General O, shortly after his promotion, strongly suggests that he was attacking generals disloyal to Kim (in addition to those already displaced), and was warning the entire officer corps that they "must firmly defend with their lives the party Central Committee, headed by Comrade Kim Il-sung."

5. It may be conjectured that the adventurist seizure of the Pueblo and the trying period of negotiations leading to release of the crew stirred dissension in the army leadership. In addition, there may have been an expressed unwillingness among cooler heads to go on with new actions entailing risks in confrontation with U.S. forces. This opposition apparently was beaten down by Kim between the fall of 1968 and spring 1969 with the support of militant generals, who were rewarded for their loyalty.

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6. This conjecture regarding internal army dissent seems to get strong support from the important and highly polemical editorial in Nodong Sinmun of 11 April 1969. The editorial seems to be defending Kim from charges that he was not the most competent military strategist in North Korea, insisting that a major military line can be formulated "only by an outstanding leader, who is aware better than anyone else" of the overall situation. It attacked "flunkeyists and factionalists" who had "danced to the tune of the enemy" -- that is, took a moderate line in international matters. It implied that the army today must act like the anti-Japanese guerrillas in earlier days by

...resolutely safeguarding the high authority and prestige of the guidance of the leader from all sorts of attacks of the enemies at home and abroad, implacably fighting without the slightest vacillation against unsound ideas of all hues contradictory to the ideas of the leader whenever and wherever, unconditionally accepting the lines and policies, orders and instructions of the leader...  
(emphasis supplied)

This passage -- particularly the highly unusual reference to enemies "at home" -- stands as one of the clearest indications that Kim's military line has been under criticism in recent months.

7. It may be further conjectured that Kim was challenged on other policies, including the overall subversive effort against the South. He has also purged General Ho Pong-hak, who until October 1968 was head of the party's Liaison Bureau (which shares responsibility with special army units for dispatching agent teams to the South).

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8. In addition, Kim has moved a new general into the political watch-dog post in the army. Lt. General An Yong-hwan was first identified in his post as Director of the Army's General Political Bureau during the Pyongyang celebration of Kim's 57th birthday -- i.e., on 15 April 1969.

9. Thus, by the time of the 15 April shootdown, Kim had moved loyal followers into key military positions. This enabled him to beat down apparent opposition to his policy of continuing to harass Washington and of egoistically asserting his revolutionary fervor. He has, in fact, upstaged not only Brezhnev and Mao, but also Castro as the leader who dares use his armed forces to pluck feathers from the eagle's tail. His ability to enforce this policy on the North Korean regime should be further strengthened as a result of the outcome of the shootdown, and additional spectacular actions against United States or South Korean forces may be expected.

10. There are many possibilities for such actions at some future time. For example, beyond the prospect of new paramilitary landings south of the demilitarized zone, Kim may be emboldened to dispatch infiltration missions against such targets as Kimpo Airfield near Seoul or an American air-defense missile base.

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